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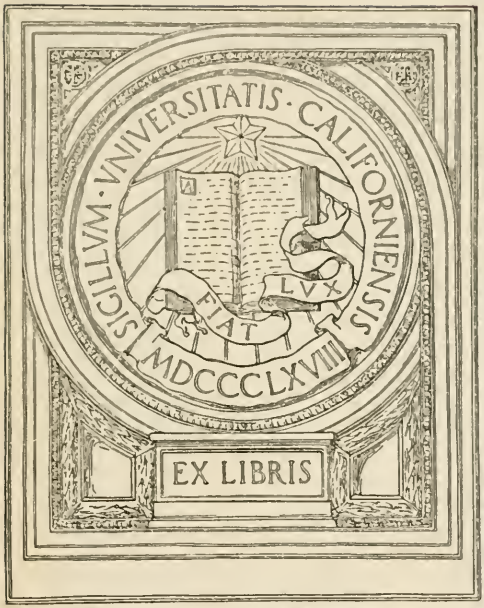

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THE DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

An ALMANAC SELLER

AND A

PASSER-BY

The AUTHOR

GIACOMO LEOPARDI

SAN FRANCISCO

A New Year Greeting from Edwin and Robert Grabhorn

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THE DIALOGUE

Translated from the *Italian* by

CHARLES EDWARDES

Almanac Seller. Almanacs! New Almanacs! New Calendars! Who wants new Almanacs?

Passer-by. Almanacs for the New Year?

Almanac Seller. Yes, Sir.

Passer-by. Do you think this New Year will be a happy one?

Almanac Seller. Yes, to be sure, Sir.

Passer-by. As happy as last year?

Almanac Seller. Much more so.

Passer-by. As the year before?

Almanac Seller. Still more, Sir.

Passer-by. Why? Should you not like the New Year to resemble one of the past years?

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Almanac Seller. No, Sir, I should not.

Passer-by. How many years have gone by since you began to sell almanacs?

Almanac Seller. About twenty years, Sir.

Passer-by. Which of the twenty should you wish the New Year to be like?

Almanac Seller. I do not know.

Passer-by. Do you not remember any particular year which you thought a happy one?

Almanac Seller. Indeed I do not, Sir.

Passer-by. And yet life is a fine thing, is it not?

Almanac Seller. So they say.

Passer-by. Would you not like to live these twenty years, and even all your past life from your birth, over again?

Almanac Seller. Ah, dear Sir, would to God I could!

Passer-by. But if you had to live over again the life you have already lived, with all its pleasures and sufferings?

Almanac Seller. I should not like that.

Passer-by. Then what other life would you like to live? Mine, or that of the Prince, or whose? Do you not think that I, or the Prince, or anyone else, would reply exactly as you have done; and that no one would wish to repeat the same life over again?

Almanac Seller. I do believe that.

Passer-by. Then would you recommence it on this condition, if none other were offered you?

Almanac Seller. No, Sir, indeed I would not.

Passer-by. Then what life would you like?

Almanac Seller. Such an one as God would give me without any conditions.

Passer-by. A life at hap-hazard, and of which you would know nothing beforehand, as you know nothing about the New Year?

Almanac Seller. Exactly.

Passer-by. It is what I should wish, had I to live my life over again, and so would every one. But this proves that Fate has treated us all badly. And it is clear that each person is of opinion that the evil he

has experienced exceeds the good, if no one would wish to be re-born on condition of living his own life over again from the beginning, with just its same proportion of good and evil. This life, which is such a fine thing, is not the life we are acquainted with, but that of which we know nothing; it is not the past life, but the future. With the New Year Fate will commence treating you, and me, and every one well, and the happy life will begin. Am I not right?

Almanac Seller. Let us hope so.

Passer-by. Show me the best almanac you have.

Almanac Seller. Here it is, Sir. This is worth thirty soldi.

Passer-by. Here are thirty soldi.

Almanac Seller. Thank you, Sir. Good day, Sir.—Almanacs! New Almanacs! New Calendars!

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